

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

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5 March 1977

*From C. M. Marshall
to Gen. Sullivan
(disposal of Pickett)*

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Task Deception for Product Management Part
of the DCI/IC Staff

*Necessity
in
analysis*

This memorandum further describes ideas for the organization of the Product Management Staff I presented briefly under Alternative I in an earlier paper. Overall, this part of the DCI/IC staff should be the principal force in increasing and maintaining product quality within the intelligence community. The efforts of this part of the staff go beyond a narrow view of quality control. The results of quality control efforts have been to sterilize the product rather than make it more useful in many cases. Quality control has been frequently misinterpreted as being standardization. It has resulted in the creation of a standard set of qualifying words, a standard writing style, rules and procedures about coordination and agreed positions, and a limit on experimenting with new techniques of analysis and presentation. Product quality must be keyed to the consumer needs and diversity of consumers requires a system which allows diversity of output.

STAFF SECTION: NEW METHODS AND EXPERIMENTAL PRODUCTS

This staff section is responsible for R&D in new methods of analysis and presentation and for developing experimental products to test these techniques. R&D has to be a two-fold approach. First, there must be a continuous effort to develop methods to analyze problems and to test their applicability to intelligence production. Second, research needs to investigate how the results of the analysis can be best communicated to the consumer.

1. R&D in Analysis

Research in analytical techniques is virtually non-existent in the community. Work in organizational analysis and Basic Intelligence

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NSC review(s) completed.

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techniques, for example, has been instituted from the outside and has encountered strong resistance. The use of management science tools has been recognized, but probably because these can be seen as mechanical tools. Thought-provoking techniques seem to threaten the analyst's individualistic, intuitive approach, to intelligence, to unacceptably expose managers to the risk of making "wrong" estimates (i. e., those less defensible to superiors), and to interfere with the production-line approach.

DCI level initiative is needed to give visibility and support to R&D. There are disadvantages in that lower-level managers may be antagonistic to upper-level initiatives and that a lower-level approach (DI and DDI) would bring the R&D task closer to those daily concerned with products. However, I would prefer to see the involvement of subordinate elements grow gradually from the DCI's activities. Eventually, the insertion of new organizational elements, not under the direct control of production managers, may be required to provide appropriate incentives to the managers of the R&D effort and segregate their resources from those devoted to production. How to organize the community to do R&D in the long run is an important question. Contracting on a long-term basis, in order to build up high quality analysis groups, away from the day-to-day production treadmill where they can try new approaches, may be useful.

A four or five man staff could:

- Conduct surveys of new methods and assess them in a preliminary way.
- Develop programs to have appropriate R&D performed.
- Monitor the R&D programs
- Supervise testing and trial applications in production organizations.

2. R&D in Presentation

The community's output is frequently insensitive to consumer needs because products are not designed with an eye to the time

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consumers have to study them, the manner in which they like to receive information (e. g., Kissinger dislikes briefings) and the issues which need to be highlighted for their attention. I recognize that the agencies serve a number of consumers in addition to those at the national level, however, these problems probably exist elsewhere. Getting consumers to give guidance is also a problem, but the community is not making enough of an effort on its own to use presently available contacts and sources to identify their needs (see my comments on consumer research).

They should

I am somewhat unsure where you should place the staff responsibility for improving presentations. It is linked closely both to research in new methods and to consumer research. I prefer locating it with the former because new techniques (e. g., Bayesian analysis) generate new manners of presenting intelligence. Also, experimental products which test new presentations are closely related to those testing new methodologies. Some experimental products which you may investigate are new executive summaries, new ways to communicate uncertainty and even more unusual approaches such as cassette recorded briefs for dissemination to busy consumers.

STAFF SECTION: CONSUMER RESEARCH

Present efforts to identify consumers needs have been unsystematic. My staff has tried to provide feedback based on our experience with consumers in the White House and NSC. I have interviewed a number of NSC staff members. Several organizations -- ONE, DI -- have made an effort to tailor their products to some general consumer needs. Most, however, have continued to roll out products much like an assembly line, and some have been particularly unreceptive to feedback, to say nothing of using it.

The consumer research group would have three basic jobs:

- Search for techniques to use in identifying consumer needs.
- Disseminate and encourage agencies to use these techniques.
- Use these techniques to ascertain the needs of national level consumers whom the DCI supports directly.

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Getting feedback from consumers is obviously a difficult task. Users generally are too busy to respond thoughtfully and they are more likely to respond favorably because they do not have time or desire to be critical. However, intelligence has not been very diligent in pursuing consumers and not very creative in reaching them. A consumer research staff could tap a variety of sources in business (especially the publications industry) and academic circles (business schools) for market research approaches. Outside assistance could probably be sought without incurring problems in security clearances. Also, I can suggest several ideas:

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| No | 1. Extremely brief "yes-no" or "scale" questionnaires could be used to reach busy people. Essential information could be derived such as: has he read the document; did it add to his knowledge; were the points clear; and, did he find the paper valuable enough to keep? |
| No | 2. Questionnaires of varying lengths could be used for different consumers. For example, one type of questionnaire could be used for analysts, one for staffs supporting major consumers, and one for unfamiliar third parties (e. g., consultants). |
| yes | 3. Interviews of varying types can be conducted. Several readers could be interviewed in depth; many could be simply called on the phone and asked a few unclassified questions. Sampling could be used to reduce the volume of work. |
| yes | 4. Face-to-face conversation with each consumer is not critical. A great deal can be learned about a man's needs by talking to those around him and by speculating about the type of work he does and what he needs to do it. In this sense a consumer's speeches, publications and other reflections of his demand for information could be studied. |
| ? | 5. A program of experimental products along with close monitoring of their reception is another major way of testing consumer needs. |

Flexibility is critical. Questionnaires should add or delete items as issues gain or lose importance. Polling should initially sample the general views of people, then find key problems and pursue these in

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greater detail. Short and long questionnaires and different styles of interviewing should be intermixed in order to keep the effort alive. Different approaches should be used for the different categories of publications -- i.e., current products (e.g., CIB) versus estimates (e.g., NIE's) versus special products (e.g., weapons studies). The research effort need not be a statistically intense, scientifically oriented task. Since the present efforts of the community are so underdeveloped, I think it is far more important that an aggressive, common-sense approach toward eliciting consumer reaction be taken. A well managed effort will easily surface major issues and problems in consumer demand.

STAFF SECTION: PRODUCT EVALUATION

The community's present output needs constant review and evaluation. Judging by the products I have seen and the interviews I have had with consumers, the intellectual quality and appropriateness of many products are questionable. Not only are they insensitive to consumer needs, but they lack real substance. Many recite facts gained from collection systems with no real analysis; hedging muffles the message; isolated facts are tied together with simple inferences that could be done by practically anyone; and clichés and dubious assumptions abound. The agencies have been resistant to criticisms such as these, arguing that real analysis has been done but is not presented in order to protect the consumer's time, or they have simply been irritated at being evaluated.

The principal responsibilities of this section would be (a) to conduct evaluations of products in general and of those destined for national consumers in particular, and (b) to encourage each agency to develop and improve its own system for product evaluation. The principal tasks which the group would face are:

- Investigating quality control experiences in industry, academic institutions, and other government organizations for ideas.
- Defining various measures of product quality and their applicability to community outputs.
- Establishing means by which products can be judged and the results sent to appropriate individuals.

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- Developing procedures to insure that, based upon feedback, changes in products take place.
- Conducting evaluations of specific community outputs and of products (e. g., NIE's) going to national level consumers.

Considering the qualitative problems and the community's capacity to resist, rendering critical but constructive evaluations will be an extremely difficult task. Performing perceptive evaluations is intellectually demanding in its own right. Submitting these evaluations to individuals unaccustomed to such feedback, and convincing them of the need to change, is doubly difficult. Defining quality will be a continuing challenge. The view of "what is quality" varies among producers and users; an understanding of these different views is important in determining what influences need to be employed to improve output. The definition of quality also covers a number of criteria -- e. g., the length of publications, quality of English grammar, number of products, response time to questions, analysts' intuitive satisfaction, and the presence or absence of feedback. Each criterion has some merit in the perspective of different participants, and all have some validity in an absolute sense.

A main effort of this section should be to work out the qualitative methods of evaluation. For example, the depth of analysis in products will need to be assessed, the mix of data and conclusions, the systematic presentation of speculative explanations, etc. Doing this is going to be far more threatening to analysts' pride and sense of competence than more mechanical controls. Hence, there will be a need for very competent and articulate evaluators. Consultants and outside experts may be used in panels or other ways to assist in judging output. Sampling could be used to keep the section from being swamped with products.

STAFF SECTION: PRG AND SU MONITORING

More than half the effort of the intelligence agencies is devoted to these two nations. For this reason alone I think that two sections at the DCI level should be created to monitor the entire intelligence effort devoted to them. These sections should not control the activities of various agencies, which would interfere in the organizational prerogatives of managers. Their tasks would include:

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- Providing the DCI with recommended guidance to be implemented through the USIB and other interagency forums.
- Monitoring the estimates and other products which are forwarded to national consumers.
- Expediting and representing the DCI in dealing with new or major issues (e. g., PRC missile location).
- Improving the coordination among different agencies and the use of collection, processing and production resources.

In essence, these groups attempt to coordinate the strategies of all the diverse elements of the community which follow the SU or the PRC. Their leverage in the process rests upon their informal influence, their ability to move among all agencies, and their capability to influence the DCI's decisions. In addition to studying the efficiency of the community's operations and evaluating their products, the section would have a role in the budgeting process, assisting the DCI controller in evaluating the impact of changes in funding.

STAFF SECTION: SPECIAL PROJECTS

This might be a small group of individuals dealing with particular projects which arise from time to time. For example:

- Monitoring the economic intelligence effort or other problem areas in the same manner as the PRC and SU are watched.
- Managing product reviews and coordinating the efforts in the NSCIC forum.
- Guiding the preparation of papers addressing major issues or breaking new ground in intelligence analysis (e. g., new in-depth long range studies of international affairs).

In a sense, this is a catch all group. It provides a pool of manpower to which important projects can be assigned which cross several other

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sections or have a unique sensitivity. It can manage relationships with the NSCIC, the USIB and other bodies. It can help other staff sections with particularly difficult enterprises.

CONCLUSION

Your staff has a dual role. It supports the DCI directly in his efforts to satisfy the needs of national consumers. Also, it establishes and encourages agencies to implement systems which will enable them to conduct their own quality control and product improvement programs. In doing so, it monitors the general quality of intelligence products.

I proposed discrete sections for each major function. Many of these tasks are new to the community, and, therefore, ill-defined. Some, such as product evaluation, are threatening and intellectually difficult. All are going to encounter various forms of resistance. Consequently, I feel separate sections will give each function the visibility it requires and will communicate to staff members a clearer idea of their jobs.

The hazard of such separation is overlap and a major need for coordination. I recommended in my previous memo the establishment of standing groups or the assignment to one individual of the responsibility for coordinating all the work of the DCI staff in important areas. Similar coordination will be needed within your staff.

Personnel selection is critical. The diversification of the staff to include more than CIA personnel has already been discussed. I think it is important to realize that different sorts of people are needed for different tasks. Choosing all old intelligence hands, or experts on particular areas, can pose real problems in introducing new techniques or recognizing problems. Younger, though inexperienced, people have a shortcoming in knowledge, but a freshness of view. It seems to me that a mixture of the two is much needed in the DCI's staff.

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